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Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 20 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to recall the seminar on the theme "Ratification and implementation of the universal anti-terrorism instruments in the Baltic States", which was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and was held in Vilnius on 6 and 7 November 2003.

In this regard, I have the honour to submit herewith the text of the Chairman's summary of the above-mentioned event (see annex). I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be distributed as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 156.

(*Signed*) Dr. Gediminas **Šerkšnys**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 20 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

"RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSAL ANTI-TERRORISM INSTRUMENTS IN THE BALTIC SEA STATES"

Vilnius, Lithuania, 6-7 November 2003

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

On 6-7 November 2003, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized together a seminar on the "Ratification and Implementation of the Universal Anti-Terrorism Instruments in the Baltic Sea States". Other international organizations – the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) assisted in, and contributed to, the organization of the event.

Experts and representatives of the following states attended the seminar:

- Member states of the CBSS: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, and Sweden;
- Observers of the CBSS: France, Italy, The Netherlands, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States;
- Belarus was invited and participated at the seminar as a neighbouring country.

The seminar aimed at providing guidance for the self-assessment of national legislation, based on the provisions of universal anti-terrorism instruments and Security Council resolution 1373. The participants were able to exchange information on the ratification and implementation of these instruments in their respective countries; they also identified common regional trends and challenges.

The Chair summarized the discussions as follows:

In the morning session, the need for continuous efforts of countries in fighting terrorism was emphasized by the host country. It was noted that a framework for action was set by the UN S.C. Resolution 1373 (2001). The host government representative underlined that the countries of the Baltic Sea Region should give due consideration to a regional approach in the prevention of terrorist activities. Improved control of migratory flows was suggested as a possible area for closer regional cooperation.

The representatives of UNODC emphasized that it was essential not only to demonstrate general political commitment by becoming parties to the universal instruments related to the prevention and suppression of international terrorism, but to continue paying attention to the implementation of these legal instruments and other tools against terrorism. UNODC encouraged countries to use its expertise in improving national antiterrorist legislation.

It was noted that there were three main elements in the United Nations' strategy to support global efforts against terrorist activities: *dissuasion* of disaffected groups from embracing terrorism, *denial* of means to carry out terrorist acts and support for broad-based international *cooperation*.

The CBSS Commissioner urged the participants not only to concentrate on vigorous implementation of international legal anti-terrorist norms, but also give due consideration to human rights issues in the legislative process. She suggested that in many cases anti-terrorism legislation might have been adopted too hastily.

Both, UNODC experts and the CBSS Commissioner emphasized the need for greater public awareness raising in the field of anti-terrorism activities.

Experts and representatives of Sweden, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and France made presentations about their countries' progress in ratifying and implementing the universal anti-terrorism instruments and reported on resulting changes in their national legislation. It was noted that in some countries lack of human and financial resources had repercussions on implementation.

Experts from Sweden and Norway stressed their efforts to incorporate human rights issues in the process of making amendments to their national anti-terrorist laws. An expert from Lithuania raised the question of compliance with the obligation, imposed by the UN S.C. resolution 1373, to freeze all terrorist funds, while respecting Lithuanian national laws. These do not allow the freezing of assets or property for more than 48 hours without launching pre-trial investigation.

The CBSS Commissioner drew the attention of the participating countries to the fact that it was important to create monitoring mechanisms, which take into account human rights concerns.

In the afternoon session, the representative of the International Monetary Fund drew attention to the eight special recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force and the need to criminalize the financing of terrorism, to freeze, seize and confiscate terrorist assets and to cooperate internationally in exchanging information.

The representative of the OSCE emphasized the fact that regional organisations, such as OSCE, are well placed to promote universal anti-terrorism instruments and facilitate international cooperation through specific technical assistance to participating states.

The representative of the Council of Europe stated that his organization strongly supported efforts of national governments towards ratification and implementation of anti-terrorism instruments at the European and at the universal levels through the provision of tailor-made programmes. The Council of Europe welcomed a coordinated approach by international actors in providing technical assistance and expertise to support national governments in this task.

Finally, as an opportunity to continue the dialogue started in Vilnius, both UN ODC and OSCE representatives drew the attention of the participants to the forthcoming 3rd meeting of the Counter Terrorism Committee with regional and sub-regional organizations to be held in Vienna on 12 March 2004 as an occasion to continue efforts at coordination and cooperation in the fight against terrorism.